

Winner: Kieran Padilla, Senior at Capital High School (ID)



Passage: From One Place To The Next



KIERAN PADILLA is currently a senior at Capital High School in Boise (ID). He continues to play in many musical groups, both inside and outside of school. While writing this essay he had just completed his junior year and was beginning the college admission process. Kieran is applying to many art schools around the Northwest, and looks forward to contributing to whatever school he may attend.

I draw a deep breath and still myself as I get ready to answer the phone. I can see from the caller ID that we are about to get an offer for our jazz trio to play at a party. Just the night before, a warm Friday evening in early June, a woman who watches us play at a nearby coffee shop, asks for our number so that she can hire us to play at her anniversary party this summer. I press the button and begin to speak with this prospective employer, who is checking on our rates and availability.

My heart is pumping as we talk: she loves our music, she has agreed to our fee and now we are down to setting the date. I feel the dead weight of disappointment settle around my shoulders like a damp winter scarf, as she tells me the date of her anniversary and party: August 20th. *August 20th*, one day after August 19th, when our friend and pianist of our jazz trio leaves to move in to his new dorm at the University of Nevada, Reno, seven agonizing hours away from Boise (ID). I have to decline the gig and she graciously sighs and says oh well, she might book us for a Christmas party sometime, if we are all ever in the same place, at the same time, again. The doubtful tone of her voice reverberates through my mind.

I replace the receiver in the cradle, sighing, and wishing that I could somehow freeze frame this summer; Matt, Jeremy and me, a good jazz trio, who love being together and love playing music with each other. But life is changing—Jeremy is heading out of state for college, while Matt and I remain behind to finish our last year of high school.

The "failed party date" experience is just the first of many harbingers that change is coming. Our high school friends, who have just graduated, are hard to round up, even to take in the summer's blockbuster movie; they are working long, hard hours to make money for books and expenses. When we do get together they are most excited about emailing their new roommate for this fall, and finding the best deal on laptops or mini refrigerators for their dorm rooms.

When band camp began this month, it seemed sacrilegious to put my drum sticks in the section leader's locker. All I can see is the face of last year's lead snare drummer, not my own, as I read the band roster, and my name is listed as lead snare player. The new freshmen look so short and their voices seem so high. I miss the seniors who made band so fun and made me feel honored to be a part of it. I am the senior now. Will I ever have the patience to take a freshman under my wing, when I feel as if I still need to be under someone else's wing?

Transition. My mom once told me that this word is used to label the most difficult stage in childbirth. When I asked her why, she explained that changes in life can be very hard on us, and that the word "transition" aptly describes the hard work that comes before the great victory of meeting your new child. At times she reminds me that in life, we have to lay down the old before we pick up the new, and that the new has many unknown variables. Maybe this explains why I feel as if I am holding my breath as I enter my senior year in high school.

As I watch my older friends head out for their first year of college, I realize that they have a great air of adventure about them because they have laid down the old and are stretching out to grab on to the new. They are stepping out and I am stepping into my new shoes, as a senior in high school, ready to see what life holds for me. What college will I attend, what state will I live in, who will I meet, what knowledge will kindle the intense flame of curiosity in my mind? The answer to all these questions and more lie right around the next bend in my life. No longer is my life punctuated by dreary grey question marks, but rather by bold red exclamation marks. Let the adventure begin!

In two weeks school goes back and I begin my senior year, and my own college search, in earnest. We have to plan a send off for Jeremy before he heads out next week, and maybe we'll even play one last night together at the coffee shop. Matt and I talked over lunch break at band camp yesterday. We'll never forget Jeremy and how he has been our friend and pushed us to grow musically. Yet already an idea has begun to germinate, like an alfalfa sprout from a miniscule seed. Matt and me, acoustic guitar and drums, Matt writes the music and I write the lyrics, songs that will make people's hearts shine, like they do when Jack Johnson sings about banana pancakes. Passages... transitions... exclamation marks... a grand new adventure waiting around the next corner.